

AN  
EXPEDIENT  
FOR  
P E A C E :

P E R S W A D I N G  
An Agreement amongst CHRI-  
STIANS from the Impossibility of their  
Agreement in the Matters of RELIGION.

ALSO SHEWING  
The Nature and Causes of the Present Differen-  
ces, the Unreasonableness of Persecution, the Equi-  
ty of Toleration, and the great Benefits of a

**Pacifick Charter.**

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with Allowance.

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L O N D O N,  
Printed by *George Larkin* at the *Two Swans* with-  
out *Bishopsgate*. 1 6 8 8.

EXPEDIENT

FOR

PEACE

REWARDING

ALL AGENTS AND CHURCHES  
AND ALL AGENTS AND CHURCHES  
AND ALL AGENTS AND CHURCHES  
AND ALL AGENTS AND CHURCHES

ALL AGENTS AND CHURCHES

ALL AGENTS AND CHURCHES  
ALL AGENTS AND CHURCHES  
ALL AGENTS AND CHURCHES  
ALL AGENTS AND CHURCHES

Scientific Character

SCIENTIFIC CHARACTER

LOW DOWN

Printed by George Larkin at the Typographic Press  
and Published by the same Press

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READER,

**I** Saw the World in a Flame, and among the rest, have thrown in my Bucket to quench it: Indeed I have been something in haste; but where there is Fire in the case, this must not be called a Fault, but a Duty: But I hope I have not made so much haste, or been so ill guided, as to mistake with some, and fill my Bucket with Oyl, instead of Water. I'll assure thee I drew it from a very Charitable Fountain, and am none of those that have either Respect to Persons or Parties: But I think I need not make my Excuse for the ensuing Discourse, for that would be to Apologize for doing my Duty. All that I shall desire of thee is, That before thou begin to read, thou lay aside all those Common Enemies to Truth and Peace, viz. Passion, Prejudice, Partiality, &c. or else we shall both of us lose our Labours.

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# THE END

I have been thinking of you much lately, and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are well and happy. I have been very busy lately, but I have managed to find some time to write to you. I have been thinking of you much lately, and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are well and happy. I have been very busy lately, but I have managed to find some time to write to you.



(1)

Now the concert of Religion is to make men happy here, as well as hereafter: and all that binds this is but a yoke, that our Heavenly Father has put upon us, that we may be able to bear it, &c. And our Heavenly Father has put upon us, that we may be able to bear it, &c. And our Heavenly Father has put upon us, that we may be able to bear it, &c.

ANN

# EXPEDIENT

E. O. R.

# PEACE.

**R**ELIGION (I will not say the True Religion) as men manage it, is become the grievance and burden of the Nation; and is the proper Province of the State to take it into consideration: When the *Messias* was born, the holy Angels Anthem was, *Glory to God in the Highest, Peace on Earth, Good Will towards Men*; but ill men, and the Devil together, have ordered things so, that the same is inverted, and may now be said, *Disbonour to God on High, Confusion on Earth, Ill Will towards Men*: The truth is, men have been so madly extravagant, in the things they call Religion, and have made such tumults and stirrs in this World about the things of another, that notwithstanding I contend earnestly for a Toleration, as the only remedy to heal them, yet 'tis not for a Toleration to do mischief; and I can willingly subscribe, after all I shall say in behalf thereof, that no sort or party of men should be indulged in any of their Religions or Perswasions, of what denomination soever; but those that are ready and willing to give the State security for their good be.

behaviour and peaceable living. Now the concern of Religion is to make men happy here, as well as hereafter; and after all mens talk, has but two Parts, *To love the Lord our God with all our hearts, &c. And our Neighbour as our selves*: But men have been so mad, that they have almost vacated both, by over zealously and indiscreetly endeavouring to perform the first, and have thought they could not love God enough, unless they hated and destroyed their Neighbour: That these things are but too true, all Christendom by sad experience can attest, and in particular this unhappy Nation; which like a Ship at Sea, has been long a sinking: The Captain indeed labours to save her, having found out her leaks, and calls to his men for assistance; but they like madmen, every one endeavour to secure something of her Cargoe, not considering that when the Ship is gone, all is gone; and instead of assisting, do unreasonably oppose him: So that he must save them against their wills, or they will inevitably perish.

Indeed it is a lamentable thing to consider that that same Religion which was given by Heaven on purpose to the Sons of Men to make them happy, should by an unhappy concurrence of evil accidents, make them miserable; and I think to find out those evil accidents, 'tis the duty of every man, especially of every Christian; and therefore I will lay down my Observations thereof, although I meet with the common fate of Reconcilers, to have blows for my pains.

Then First, I take notice men make a false Calculation of the Differences and Dissensions of men in the points of Religion, and call them criminal, when they are not; and endeavour to reconcile them, when 'tis impossible; and put too great a value on Agreements, that is, when men do the same things together; not regarding so much, the Truth, Unity and Sincerity of their Minds, as the Company, Presence and Congregation of their Bodies in one Place, and performing a thing after the same manner.

All

All the World will acknowledge with me, that what is impossible to be done, is not necessary to be done. Now as long as men have variety of Principles, several Educations, Constitutions, Tempers, Distempers, Hopes, Fears, Degrees of Light, and Degrees of Understanding, several Capacities, Offices and Employments; 'tis impossible (and therefore not necessary) they should be all of one Mind: And therefore he that attempts it, does like him that claps his Shoulder to the Ground to stop an Earth quake; that would stop the course of the Sun, stem the raging Ocean, or pull down the Pillars of the Earth; 'Tis foolish therefore to wish it or expect it, and they that endeavour it, do but vex and trouble the World; and thinking to procure, they but spoil all its Harmony, which consists in so great variety of Discords.

It has been said by a learned Prelate, that in the large interval of sixteen hundred and odd years, so much juggling hath passed in Christendom, "That the obscurity of some Questions, the nicety of some Articles, the intricacy of some Revelations, the variety of Humane Understanding, the windings of Logick, the tricks of Adversaries, the subtilty of Sophisters, the ingagement of Educations, personal Affections, the portentous number of Writers, the infinity of Authorities, the vastness of some Arguments, as consisting in the enumeration of many Particulars, the uncertainty of others, the several degrees of Probabilities, the difficulty of Scriptures, the invalidity of Probation of Tradition, the opposition of all exterior Arguments to each other, and their open Contestation, the publick violence done to Authors and Records, the private Arts and Supplantings, the falsifyings and indefatigable Industry of some to abuse all Understandings, and all Perswasions into their own Opinions: These and a thousand more, even all the difficulties of Things, all the weaknesse of Man, and all the Arts of the Devil, have  
"made

"made it impossible for any man in so great variety of  
 'master nor to be deceived'; And say I too, have made it  
 equally impossible for men to agree, or be, all of one mind.

It hath been made plainly appear, that Rites and Ce-  
 remonies, that such and such Vestments, such and such  
 Officers or Ministers, such Discipline, Government or way  
 of Administration, such Places or Times, &c. are things  
 of an indifferent nature; and not of absolute necessity to  
 Mens Salvation, nor belong to the Being or Essence of  
 Gods Church, but are things alterable according to Con-  
 tingencies and Emergencies, to be retained or disallowed  
 according to the custom of Places or Nations, or as they  
 are made plainly to appear to minister to the Ends of  
 Peace and Charity, for the Edification of Gods Church,  
 and not Destruction.

And that the essential and fundamental qualifications that  
 make a man a Christian and a true Member of Jesus Christ,  
 are Holiness, Purity, Piety, Charity, Belief in God, and  
 Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and our Warrant herein, is  
 what St. Paul told the Romans, *This is the Word of Faith  
 which we Preach, That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth  
 the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe with thine heart that God  
 hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved;* as also  
 St. John, *For every Spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is  
 come in the flesh, is of God; God dwelleth in him; and he in  
 God;* So that such a belief, with sincere and hearty endea-  
 vours to please God according to the best notices a man can  
 get, will secure a man his Salvation; if it will not, there  
 is no Salvation to be had at all.

Now the best notices we can get, and only Rule to direct  
 our Lives and Actions, are the Books of the Old and New  
 Testament, wherein are transmitted the Transactions of  
 Heaven with the Sons of Men, and are of an inestima-  
 ble value, teaching all things fully that relate to God or  
 Men, as to the Nature and Worship of the one, or the Duty  
 and

and Salvation of the other. Now that men can understand these Books, is a thing without all controversie; and only disputed by them whose interest it is they should not, I mean men of ordinary and mean Capacities; for if not, to what end were they wrote? Or why to them directed? And why are all commanded to read and search them, if they were not capable to understand them? And how can such men who deny it, be able to vindicate the Wisdom, Goodness or Justice of Almighty God, in delivering his Creatures a Rule to walk by, and exact a due conformity thereto, if they were not capable to understand it? No certainly, the Good God, as he has condescended to give his Creatures a Rule, so he has calculated this Rule to all their Capacities, and so adapted the one for the other, that they have the greatest Reason in the World to Adore and Admire his Wisdom and Goodness for the same.

I will allow that some can better understand them than others, and that they are not equally understood of all, because of the difference of mens Capacities and Acquirements, and because they should have a dependance, and be behold-ing to one another, which ministers to Charity; but then nothing is more certain than that all men of the meanest Capacities, may understand them sufficient and enough for Salvation, if they come with a sincere affection of being instructed, and of finding out Truth, otherwise they would not answer the end for which they were designed: Some things indeed the deepest Heads cannot reach, and others the weakest Understanding can hardly possibly mistake, and those too, are all of the greatest importance.

If only one sort of men were able to understand them, as some would have it, we should have had notice from Heaven, who those should be, and how qualified, and that in such plain Characters, that it should not be possible we should mistake; but there is no such thing. And if any sort of men claim this *Arcanum* above others, 'tis an affront



to the Understandings of all the rest, and their words ought not to be taken in their own Case. And indeed, 'tis a thing too great to be trusted with any one sort of men: Some indeed will only have *Learned Men* capable of understanding them, but then if this should be, what a lamentable case the World would be in? Truth would then be a precarious thing, and we should have no more of it than these Learned Men please, and if they should be byassed, corrupted, or be dishonest, what must the other three parts of the World do? Must they lie at their Mercy, and their Salvation depend on their Honesty? No, God forbid! And blessed be his Name, he has taken care men shall not lie liable to any such Impositions. But if these men will needs be in the right above the rest, and understand for them, let them do their duty for them too; for 'tis not reasonable they should be charged with a duty, that do not understand it. But having found their own failings herein, and that they are but men like others, daring not to be so confident as usual, they betake themselves to shifts; and to countenance their fallibility, supply the defects of honesty, and salve their imposition of their sense; they set up a strange sort of Infallibility, which indeed would put an end to all the Disputes and Differences in Christendom, were there any such thing. But that which they have invented to put out the Flame, serves only to increase it; for where the power of Infallibility is lodged, Heaven has given us no notice; which it would certainly have done, had there been any such thing: And 'tis certain, that those who pretend most to this Infallibility, have been most deceived of all.

Indeed the *Catholicks*, as they call themselves, have drove furiously, and forced all their people to do the same thing, and worship God the same way; but this cannot be called an Agreement, no more than Sheep are said to agree, when they are drove up and Pounded all together by the Shepherd. And there is greater Agreement amongst those (though  
the



the foolish World think to the contrary) who worship their Maker under the Administration of several Disciplines, and Conduktion of several Guides: For Force and Violence may make a Congregation of Bodies, but no Unity of Minds. 'Tis only a Hearty Intention, Sincerity of Mind and Affections, Simpleness and Identity of Address to the same Object, which can be called Unity and Agreement, and nothing else; for other things, though they may seem differences and disagreements to men, yet really they are none at all; for the circumstances of Time and Place, Publick or Private, Day or Night, the several Instances of Respects, Methods and way of Worship, are all one and the same thing to God Almighty; He only looks at the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace; Differences with men are not so with him, if they agree in sincerity of Affections and integrity of Spirit; that's the Agreement he looks after.

'Tis true again, that men understand the Scriptures differently, and to different senses; but why this difference of Understanding should be objected as a Crime, I know not: For 'tis impossible it should be otherwise, so long as there be such great variety of Humane Understandings; and as long as they understand not differently and amiss on a bad end and design, they cannot possibly be criminal; for no man is obliged to understand better than he can. Then again, many men may be totally ignorant of many things in Scripture, and yet be very innocent; and certainly if their Total Ignorance be no fault, their understanding differently those things, which they might have been innocently ignorant of, cannot make them guilty of a Crime; if it should, it would highly advance Ignorance, and very much depress Understanding and Knowledge. But further, if they understand them differently (which I contend for the most part they do) in order to promote a Virtue, encourage a Grace, or suppress a Vice, or any Immorality in themselves, then this difference ought to be so far from being reputed a

Crime, that it becomes necessary, and ought to be encouraged ; and they that put a scandal on it, are very much to blame : And it must be allowed that men may dispute things in *utramque partem*, affirm and deny the same thing innocently enough, so the *good intention* be secured, & it be to edification, and make no infraction on Charity. But the things that become criminal, are those sort of differences which every side and party of Christians are but too guilty of, and which concerns them all to amend ; and that is, forcing an interpretation on Scripture, contrary to the natural and genuine sense thereof, and that with a design to countenance their own Interest or Party. And what the Papists object, is but too true (though they have the least reason to complain) that every one interprets the Scripture to his Side and Party (and so do they to theirs) and that the divisions of Protestants have been principally occasioned by every one's having the use of the Scriptures ; which admitting to be true, since these differences are unavoidable, and naturally innocent in themselves, and only accidentally evil, and much better at the worst, than forced Agreements or Conspiracies ; one would think they should have no further to object : Since further, if the use of good things should be denied and prohibited on the score of their abuse, and accidental Inconveniencies, a just pretence might be brought in for all the Irregularities in the World.

Now since the Essentials and Circumstantials in Religion are agreed on, since it has been made to appear that every one may understand so much of Religion and the Scriptures as is necessary for his Salvation ; since 'tis impossible men should not differ and disagree, as also in most things not to be deceived, one would think these things should make men modest and peaceable, and hinder the ill effect of any dissention that might happen amongst them.

But men are willing to admit and indulge one another a difference of Thought and Understanding in most of their  
Secu-

Secular Concerns, but grow impatient and are unwilling to admit any difference of Sentiments in the Concerns of Religion; and to their dealing on this account, most of the confusions and distractions of Christendom owe their original; and after the unreasonableness, injustice and folly of the thing has been made to appear to the World, one would think they should cease their mad and ineffectual proceedings.

For it has been made to appear to the World, That Conscience ought not to be constrained; that a Corporal Punishment ought not to be inflicted for a Spiritual Fault; that men ought not to Punish where they have no power to Command; that they cannot command the belief of a thing, unless they give a sufficient Reason; and that, that can only be sufficient, when the party is convinced; and that is not their power to know, unless by the party acknowledged; that matters intellectual are not discerned by a Secular Power; That to punish men for differing in opinion, is as unreasonable as to punish them for having different Faces; that no humane Authority is either sufficient for cognizance or determination, or competent for infliction of punishment in such matters; that the Terms of Schismatick and Heretick are only Scare-crows, and signify next to nothing; that no man is a Schismatick but he that departs from a good Life, that fears not God, nor loves his Neighbour; and that no man is a Heretick, or ought to be punished as such, but he that teaches ill life, or takes up an ill Opinion contrary to Fundamentals, on a bad account, viz. on the Score of Pride, Ambition, Interest, Malice, or any other Sinister End, which will be very difficult to be known; that 'tis impossible for men not to differ, that 'tis not necessary they should agree; that all Sorts and Parties of Christians have been deceived; that amidst so great difficulties, 'tis impossible they should not be deceived; that Punishments ought to be proportioned to their Crimes; that

that Spiritual Faults ought only to have Spiritual Punishments ; that a certain Punishment ought not to be inflicted for an uncertain Fault ; that most Spiritual Faults are uncertain ; that if a man was punished or killed, he was certainly punished or killed ; but that it was not so certain he was in a Fault ; that Conclusions ought not to be stronger than their Premises ; that no man ought to be Judge in his own Case ; that Reason, Discourse and Arguments are the only Proper Methods and Instruments to Convince Men, and no other ; that if others of an Heterogenial stamp were used, they might make Hypocrites, but no Profelites, and that they were never accompanied with success ; that the generality of men are disposed to live quietly ; that Oppression, Tyranny and Penal Laws, are occasion of most of the disturbances in Christendom ; that fallible men ought not to call their Opinions Articles of Faith ; that they ought not over-hastily to interest their Maker in their uncertain Cause ; that Gods Glory doth consist with the Good of Men, and may be maintained without their destruction. Further it hath been made evidently to appear against them, that say, *We have a Law* ——— That Law cannot make a Truth ; that Truth is as old as the Eternal Veracity, and suffers no Degrees ; for what was yesterday, will be true to day, to morrow, and to the end of the Word : And therefore to force People to be of their Religion, because Established by Law, is a great piece of Vanity and Nonsense : That neither Fathers, Councils, no Individual Man, or Company of Men, no Power or Force upon Earth, are able to make a Truth, or an Article of Faith. No, all they are able to do, is by way of Promulgation, Declaration, or Explanation of Truth, but nothing by way of Creation ; they may illustrate indeed, and make Truth appear to be so, but they can neither add nor diminish : What was Truth, and agreeable to Gods Will, was so before, they undertook the Disquisition, or before they came into the World, and will be so when they are

are extinct and gone out of it, notwithstanding all their endeavours for, or against it.

Again, Nothing is more certain than that Men are Men, and uncertain; that they are and have been proved fallible; That General Councils have erred and contradicted one another on Record; that Fathers have been mistaken; that what has been may be again; and therefore that all respectively may be used with reverence and respects as occasion may require, as the best Humane Guides and Directors; but always with deference, and an eye to their Fallibility: that their Opinions ought not to be pressed as Articles of Faith, nor their Determinations have the weight of Mathematical Demonstrations. Methinks these Considerations should make men look a little amicably on one another, and a little come to themselves: But I find they do not, and may be the Scene is laid too far off; and therefore I will bring it nearer home, and let themselves judge.

A certain number of Pilgrims were going to the *Holy Land*, had equal desires and affections for the Place, and all moved by the same Love and Good Intention; none indeed had been there already, and therefore they were the more to seek for their way; and indeed all were very diligent to find out the true Road; and as they go along, they meet with several Ways and Paths; upon which the Company divided; some go one way, and some another, according as they thought it surer and more probable than the other; but one of the Company, of hotter Constitution than the rest, asked some of their Fellows, why they should not go their way, since they were sure they were in the right? To which they answered, They could not be sure, because they never were there; that they had the same Charts and Directions which they had, and had as honestly and sincerely perused them; induced by the same, if not greater Love and Affection to the Place; and that they did not think that way to be right, but that the Path they were going in  
was



was the surer and more probable way, and hoped that it would bring them to the Place as soon, if not sooner than theirs would; and therefore desired to be excused; adding, That if they should go with them, they should go against their Thoughts and Consciences, which would be a trouble to them all along the Road, but especially at last, if they should be mistaken. This answer, though modest and very reasonable, yet was not satisfactory; for the other pressed them hard, loving company very well, and said, That since they were all going to the same place, 'twas fit they should all go together in the same Road; and if they would not, they would take away their Provisions and Money, and force them: And their Passion and Zeal was so hot, that they did so and worse, for some they beat and wounded, others they killed; and for the Rest, at the next Town they prevailed so with the Magistrate, and misrepresented them so ill, that they got them put in durance.

Now who can but pity the hard fate of these poor Pilgrims? Or forbear to censure and give his verdict against the hot fiery Zeal of the other? But let them speak as dare: Whoever pities them, I shall say to them as *Nathan* said to *David*, *You are the Men*; All sides have been but too Guilty, and have plaid the same Pranks when in Power.

One would wonder how Christian men should have such hatred and animosities one against another, and run Counter to all the Principles of their Religion, and Laws of their Great Master; *Whose Lessons*, as one saith, *were softer than Nard, or the juice of the Candian Olive*; teaching all imaginable Complianee, mutual Forbearance and Charity; and one of his last Commands to them was, *To love one another*; but they have not minded the Commands of their Good Lord, or observed the advice of their Compassionate *Joseph*, but have fallen out by the Way, dishonoured their Profession, and ruined themselves.

But



But a man shall quickly be raised from his wonder, when he considers the mistakes under which they lie.

They greatly mistake in calling their Respective Opinions, Several Religions: I affirm there is but one God, and one Religion; and that they may as well call the several Counties in England several Nations, as to give several Opinions the denomination of several distinct Religions. We ask a man what Country man he is? If he tells us *Darbyshire, Staffordshire, or Cheshire, &c.* all is well, there is no hurt done; but if we ask him what Religion he is of? And it prove to be differing from ours; presently an animosity arises, and we look on him with strange thoughts, and reckon him almost something else than a man, and rather a Heathen than a Christian; and when we have made him such a Heathen, then we think like the *Israelites, that 'tis lawful to destroy such a Canaanite from amongst us*; never considering all this while the mans Constitution, Education, Prejudice, the Books he may have read, the Company he may have kept, &c. which may make him have different thoughts and apprehensions of things from ours, and that his Honesty and good Intention may make his Sentiments (though differing from ours) yet altogether as innocent.

Again, 'Tis a strange vanity that men have, in valuing themselves so extreemly for being of this or that persuasion or party of men, and brings a great deal of trouble to the World. One saith he is a Catholick and no Heretick; the Protestant Hereticks say they are good Protestants and no Papists; and the Church of England man saith he is of a Religion established by Law, and no Dissenter; as if Law could make a Truth; and so they go on, upbraiding one another, supposing every Division of Christians that has a distinct name, is a distinct Religion. Now if we should be so foolish in other concerns, what would the World think of us? If the *Yorkshire* men should say the *Kentish* men

men are no *Englist* men; or the *Mercantile* Tutors tell the  
*Mercers* they are no *Civilians*; would not the *Asserters* be  
 exposed to derision? Further, if a man calls not himself  
 by some name or other, as *Churchlick*, *Churchman*, *Englist*,  
*man*, *Presbyterial*, *Independant*; and he is look'd upon as  
 a piece of *Defaced* or *Antiquated* Coin that is not current:  
 If he say he is a *Christian*, that will not satisfy; he runs  
 some hazard in calling himself by that Name; but little or  
 none, in not departing from inquiry: If he calls himself  
*Lutheran*, *Calvinist*, *Quaker*, &c. all will be well; he  
 is forced, and hath Fellows, shall be respected and esteemed;  
 but if he will espouse none of their *Factions*, or interest him-  
 self in their simple Quarrels, he is branded with the odious  
 Name of *Atheist*, or to be of no Religion at all. At such  
 a high pitch of *Extravagancy* is the World come to, that  
 a Jew in a *Christian* Nation shall have more respect than  
 a *Christian*; and that for no other Reason, but because he  
 calls himself so. Should a man be so hardy as to leave  
*Pavus*, *scopulus* and *Cephus*; and call himself by that Venera-  
 ble Name, which requires some courage; 'tis odds but he  
 may be called to an account for raising a New Religion;  
 his imitation of his Holy Life should not satisfy the mad  
 World; if he cannot pronounce *Shiboleth* plainly, and herd  
 himself with a Party, there's none will take him into their  
 Folds, but out he shall lie in the fields, exposed to the mer-  
 cy of the Elements. But all this might be cured in a great  
 measure, if the State would make it Felony or Treason for  
 any man to call himself by any other Name, than that of  
*Christian*. For 'tis incredible to think what mischiefs go  
 along with these New Names; O, he is a *Papist*, says one;  
 he's a *Fanatick*, says another; they are words of reproach,  
 and their meaning is, he is an ill man; for so every Side and  
 Party accepts them one against another: And some, when  
 they would go a shorter way to work, call but their Ad-  
 versary by the name of his Sect, that serves for Evidence,

Con-

Conviction and Condemnation; then secure him Goals: But it will be asked, and ought to be enquired into, How they came by such false Notions of things? Then I say,

That Custom, Chance, Prejudice and Constitution give most men their way of Religion, and creates their Conscience too; they think this or that to be sinful, not which is really and naturally so; but what they see some men abhor and detest, and what they have been taught is so; and Youth generally take their Parents word, and swallow all infinitely and implicitly; and if one be mistaken, 'tis hardly possible but that the other will be mistaken too. And 'tis certain that the undutifulness of disobeying Parents in junctions, and the reproach and shame of being singular, and doing things contrary to their Country Customs and Usages, are great Obstacles to Truth and Peace. The Indians eat their dead Friends and Relations; and thought it a great piece of Piety, and the most honourable way of Sepulture; but the Greeks they burned them all: Alexander asked each of them, what he should give them to exchange their Method? They both answered with the greatest abhorrence imaginable, and declaimed against each others Usages as the most barbarous and undecent way in the World. Custom makes good things to seem evil, and evil things to seem good. And I have read of a Shepherd on the Mountains of Naples, who in the holy time of Lent, came with Tears in his Eyes to his Confessor; and earnestly desired Absolution, in that he had swallowed by chance a little Whey, which leaped into his Mouth from the Cheese-Press: The Father asked him, *Whether he knew himself guilty of no other Sins?* He answered, *Not any as he knew of.* He again asked him, *Whether he was not accessory to any of the Robberies and Murders committed on their Mountains?* Yes indeed, Quoth he, *that I am;* but this we never esteem a Crime; 'tis a thing daily practised by all of us, and there needs no confession for such things. By this

may be seen what Custom can do: But Education, Prejudice and Custom have still further strange Operations. For,

They strangely dispose men to be resolute and tenacious of their first-taught-Principles, and make them Deaf to the most Weighty, Sober and Convincing Reasons; and when a man is linked to a Party, there is no unchaining of him; he delights in his Slavery and Chains, and reckons him an Enemy that would free him: He will be of the Religion he was bred to, whether *Turk, Jew, or Pagan*; and thinks that always the best: Come to undeceive him, and he looks on you as an Impostor, and all the Arguments you shall bring, signify no more than Arrows against a Wall of Brass; he is resolved, say what you will, you shall not move him; he will not consider any thing that is alledged against him; will laugh at your Reasons, shift them off, and do any thing rather than be convinced; nay he comes with a Resolution to Discourse, not to be Overcome; and to say something for his Side, rather than the Truth; and what is worst of all, 'tis impossible some should be prevailed upon, who esteem all Arguments to be Temptations, and therefore look upon themselves obliged by all means to shun them.

So that this sort of obstinacy and perverseness, this partiality, this respect to Persons and Sides, and want of sincerity, and indifferency to Truth, keeps a foot our Differences, obstructs mutual Compliances and Toleration; every one calling his Fancy his Faith, his Opinion his Religion, and entitles God to all; and when God is concerned, then they think their Zeal cannot be too much; and out of an hatred to Lukewarmness, endeavour to make it as hot as they can; so hot, that it destroys Charity, Burns and Preys upon their innocent Neighbours.

But a further Accessary (and Aggravation too) of Christian Differences, is the Method and Administration of their Govern-

Government. For First, They suppose God Almighty has appointed a particular Discipline and Regiment for his Church, and then fall out about it; every one maintaining that their own particular sence is the same: Then again, they suppose that Discipline and Regiment is absolutely necessary; both which are false: For God neither hath appointed any particular way, neither is any necessary, no further than for the necessary Regulating such Assemblies as shall meet together to worship their God, or to Excommunicate a man out of such their Assemblies for his evil Life; which are things very easie to be done, and need no great Wit or Learning to Perform: And any man may be Honest, Just, True, Sincere, Charitable, Humble, and Exercise any Christian Graces or Vertues, without the help of Ecclesiastical Policy; he may pray to, or praise his God in Spirit and Truth, (which is all the way which ever Christ appointed) without the help of Church-Policy. Christs Kingdom is of another World, and requires none of the Policy of this to manage it; it ought to be kept pure and unmixt, being clear of another nature: We see Oyl in a Vessel of Water will not mix, but keep its Body intire to it self; no more ought Spirituals to be mixt with Temporals. But these Spiritual Politicians have mixt Heaven and Earth together, confounded the World with their Policy, and so jumbled things together, that Christianity is almost lost in the Composition, so that men know not where to find it. I should think that the ill success and bad effects such Policy hath hitherto had in the World, should make them ashamed, and endeavour by all means to leave such methods, which did always rather disturb than any way beautifie the Church of God. And let them further give me leave to tell them, That if all the Hedges and Enclosures in *England* were pulled down and levelled, that it would be *England* still: 'tis True Property might suffer by such a Communication; but to Heaven and

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Religion, every one has an equal Title and Claim. And if God Almighty had design'd a particular Way or Method of Worship, he would have taken care that none should miss it, and prevented all Differences about it: But he has appointed none at all, as I know of, but that of *in Spirit and in Truth*. And had any particular Way been absolutely necessary, our Saviour would have told the Woman of Samaria, when she did as good as ask him the question, *How or where they should worship God? Whether at Jerusalem or Samaria?* (For there was a great contest about it amongst the Inhabitants of each.) But he told her, *That the time was come, that they should neither Worship him at Jerusalem nor Samaria; that is, not at either of those places in particular, exclusive of others, but in Spirit and in Truth.* As if he had said, The times of limitation of Gods Worship is now over: *Jerusalem* indeed was the place appointed, and particular Rites and Ceremonies were enjoyned and made obligatory; but now those times are past, all Rites, Types and Ceremonies are abolished, and other times are come, that God must be worshipped after another manner. I observe you mind Times and Places, and particular Methods too much; and have foolish and unprofitable Contentions for the same, and mind Sincerity too little; therefore I assign and appoint you no particular Place, Method, or Time: But be sure when ever you worship God, let it be sincerely and heartily, let it be *in Spirit and in Truth*, and you shall then be accepted.

Now men have strange Contentions about the Truth of the Way of Gods Worship, but do but grope in the dark, since no way is appointed: I do not say they do amiss, if they mean well; but the Truth of the Action I reckon is the principal thing; by how much more easie it is to be performed, and more earnestly of God required; for he saith, *Son give me thy Heart.* And 'tis an easie thing for any man to know whether he is in Earnest, whether he is Sincere,



Sincere, Hearty and Real, in what he doth; whether he Loves, or Fears, or truly Worships God or no; whether the Affections of the Soul accompany his Actions, and that he is no Hypocrite: This, I say, is easie for any man of the meanest capacity to tell; But then whether the Circumstantials of our Worship be in a true way, is not so easily found out, for the Reasons aforementioned, and the great difficulties therein. And if after diligence used, (since no particular way is appointed) we mistake in choosing instances of Respect to our Maker; our mistakes are invincible, and we shall never be answerable for them: But if we be, 'tis only to him our Lord, and not to one another. And therefore 'tis the most unreasonable thing imaginable, for men to judge one another in these points, much more to impose their respective Fancies and Models, with insufferable Penalties one upon another, when they can have so little assurance they are in the Right.

But while I am endeavouring to cool and qualifie the mad World by Reasons and Arguments, detecting their mistakes, and exposing to view the unnecessary occasions of their Differences, and Unreasonableness of their Destructive Contentions, I am presently interrupted with a Text of Scripture lately

Preached in the City, and that is, Col. Mr. Wakes Text at St. Laurence and Mercers Chappel.

*send earnestly for the Faith once delivered to the Saints:* What, say some, would you not have us contend for the Faith? Would you not have us earnest for our Religion, and for the Truth? I reply, Yes by any means, and this Text doth encourage you to contend not only for the True Faith and True Religion, but also for that Faith and that Religion which you believe to be so; for that is the same to you as the True, and no difference can or ought to be made: And then this Text, if not duly tempered and moderated, is sufficient to set all Christendom together by the Ears; for every Party and Sect think their

their own way of Religion and Faith to be Primitive, Apostolical and True; and by consequence have a Commission from this Text to contend earnestly for it: And some have acted so earnestly, and depended so much on the goodness of their Cause, and trueness of their Faith, that they have Plundered, Imprisoned, nay Killed and Murdered their fellow Christians; to testify to the World their Earnestness, and that they were in Earnest; but in my Opinion, they had much better been in Jest, than so extravagantly Earnest. Therefore this Earnestness must be limited, so that it be not prejudicial to our selves, or destructive to others: It ought to be managed with the greatest Caution, Prudence and Discretion; and by no other Instruments, but those of Persuasion and Ratiocination. Now lest People should be so much in earnest again as formerly, The Wise, Judicious and Loving Father of our Country would put Bounds to such destructive Earnestness, which hath made such Devastations amongst his People; he would take their Weapons out of their hands, with which they have done so much Mischief: But they like foolish Children, are Peevish, and Forward, and exert their Passions; grow Angry, and are Sullen and Discontented, run and make their Moan to their Mother; whose too Indulgent Nature and Tender Heart, is but too much Grieved to see her Children out of Humour; and is almost ready to Sacrifice their future Happiness and Prosperity, to their present Quiet and Contentment. But what should be done in this Case, is an impertinent Question: For the Discretion and Authority of the Father, ought to prevail against the Over-fondness of the Indulgent Mother, and the Peevishness of the humourful Children; if they cry for Knives to cut them, Candles to burn them, or Food that is unwholesome for them; they must be silenced, and no notice taken of their childish demands. So that after what has been said and proved,

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It methinks 'tis the most unreasonable, uncharitable and shameful Opposition Imaginable, which some go about to make against his Majesty; that when he endeavours to make an establishment of a Toleration, and offers to put it out of the Power of any one Party to Hurt or Disturb another, and that by as good Humane Security as possibly can be contriv'd, they should so Obstinate and Childishly reject it. That when it has been made so plainly appear, that *Penal Laws and Tests*, have been the Ruine, and do ruine the Nation; and will ruine any Nation, that maintain them: That they are most Unreasonable, Unjust and Uncharitable, and yet Maintained and Continued; Good God, that men should be so Stupid! What can this argue, but that Heaven has no kindness for such men: But seeing their Obstinateness and Perverseness, gives them over to Court their own Ruine and Destruction; and, say I, *May the Rods be continued on such Fools Backs, since they are so fond of them.* For my part, I think to be clapped up in a Goal, to be Fined, Plundred, Wounded or Killed, on the score of meer Religion, and for having different Thoughts and Apprehensions from other men; is a Reproach to the Christian World, and the most Brutish, Irrational and Shamefullest thing imaginable; and I think it every mans Duty to endeavour to Extirpate such a wicked Principle.

For me to be punished for being a man, for believing when there is Reason given, or an Argument which seems to me to be Reason, which is the same thing, is a thing I can think of with Patience. I know, scarce to Countenance their such Unjustifiable Actions, there is a Black Charge advanced; and that is Heretick, Schismatick, Turbulency of Spirit, Unruly, Enemies to Government, Plotters, Seditious, Obstinate, Ungrateful, &c. These are the common Topics of Scandal which one Party charges the other with, when they have got them under, or have abused them: They think to charge others with Faults, is to make

themselves Innocent ; and the World would cry out on them, should they not have some ugly things to lay to their charge, after having so unhandſomly treated them. But theſe Aſperſions have been wiped off over and over ; and it has been ſaid, *If it be enough to Accuſe, who ſhall be Innocent ?* The Charge alſo has been returned on the Accuſers Heads, to whom indeed it belongs : For Tyrants and Oppreſſors blow the Coals, and then make Wonders at, and accuſe the Flame : They wonder men will not be quiet, and accuſe them of Diſturbance, when *They* are their only Diſturbers, and occaſion of all the Commotion ; by Oppreſſing them, and Punishing them without a Cauſe. They make multitudes of *Penal Laws*, and by Conſequence *Multitudes of Delinquents*. The fewer the *Penal Laws* are, the more Quietneſs and Peace always there is in the World ; and thoſe were happy Ages, when ——— *Verba minantia fixo are, legebantur* ——— every man might go but to the Market Croſs, and read preſently his Duty, what he was to do, and what to avoid. The plain truth is, the multitudes of *Penal Laws* do but muſter up, and ſhow the World how ſtrong they are in Delinquents ; and when they ſee their Numbers, they take Courage, and preſently Conſpire, animated by their being equally Obnoxious, to throw of their Yoke and Government, that hath made them all ſuch Criminals, and ſubjected them to Punishment, for things in their own nature Innocent ; and ſuch Laws prove generally fatal to the Makers.

Further it hath been made to appear, that 'tis a moſt Unreaſonable and Unjuſt Thing, that a King ſhould come to a Crown, and not to have the Benefit and Service of all his Subjects indifferently : That thoſe Laws which qualify one ſort of men only for his Service, are too Partial and Unjuſt ; and put it into the Power of thoſe men to do with him what they pleaſe ; That 'tis not fit nor ſafe for a Prince to have but one Staff to lean on, or one Weapon

to defend himself ; That 'tis Unreasonable and Unjust, that any one sort of men, under what Denomination soever, should engross all Honours and Preferments to themselves ; and have all the Favour of the Prince, and only sit in the Sunshine, and all the rest in the Shade ; whose Fidelity and Integrity to their Prince, their Sufficiency and Ability in Business ; their Peaceable Temper, and equal, if not more probable Arguments for the truth of their Religion ; set them on equal ground, and give them as large and just a Claim thereto as others : That such Discriminating and Partial Laws, do naturally tend to put the Kingdom in Confusion ; and as long as one Religion (as they call it) receives an Establishment, and another doth not, that has equal Pretensions to it, there will never be Peace or Quiet in *England*.

Again, It has been proved, that Laws are Naturally Null and Void, and grow into Desuetude, and need no formality of a Repeal ; after the Reasons for which they were Enacted are taken away ; or when they bring so many Inconveniencies, which out-balance their Advantages. A Law, for good Considerations is made, That for the space of Ten Years, none shall presume to Kill or Destroy such a sort of Wild Beasts ; but in the space of Five Years they grow so numerous and unruly, that they come into the neighbouring Towns, and make great havock, and destroy the Inhabitants : Will any man deny the men of the place the privilege of killing them, and charge them with a breach of the Law ? No sure ! Such Laws lose their Obligation, and ought to lose their Denomination too, and to be called something else than Laws, rather Grievances, or Nuisances, which they really are, and ought to do no Mischief under their specious pristine Title of Laws. His Majesty is charged with breach of Laws, for taking such Nuisances away ; methinks they should rather thank him for such his Low Condescension, it being



the Scavengers Office. If unruly Fire break out in our Buildings, a Door is admitted to be broken open, or a neighbouring House to be blown up, and no injustice charged. 'Tis His Majesty's Case; He pretends not to put the Fires out of mens Chimneys, or to Cancel any wholesome or necessary Laws, but to put a stop to the Outrage and Violence, to those Fiery, Cruel and Sanguinary Laws, that have made such Havock amongst his People; and if so much Power must not be allowed him, he has not Power enough to Defend Himself, or His People. But this Opposition being made by Interested and Unreasonable Men, is less to be taken notice of: And I question not, but will be over-ruled by Him, who is not partial as they are; but consults the Good of the whole, and will not let any one sort of men have Power to Oppress the rest. But then again as to our Differences,

I am utterly against reconciling of them by such Methods, which some men take; and am indifferent whether they be reconciled or no; so they may be made harmless, and easie to the Publick: And I do protest I cannot see so much Iniquity in them, as some would perswade; and hardly know how to call them Differences, but observe more their Agreement than their Difference. For all do mutually agree to Worship the same Eternal Ever-Living God, and believe in his ever-Blessed Son Jesus Christ: The Differences I most observe, are mens Differences, and mutual Animosities about Differences. And I affirm, the first Differences in the various modes of Worship, are mostly Innocent; but the second Differences are Criminal; that is, mens differing one with another, and inflicting Punishments one upon another about them; and breaking the Bonds of Charity; hating and denying Communion one to another, on the score of any way of Worship, differing from theirs, though altogether as Innocent.

And



And what I have said before, is not with a design to make all men to be of one and the same mind, to have the same thoughts, and apprehensions of things; to agree and perform the same things, after the same Manner and Method, as some men are over-sond of, and lay out all their endeavours (but to no purpose) to bring to pass; for this is neither possible nor necessary; and therefore do rather encourage honest and sincere Differences, than such forced and Hypocritical Agreements: For what signifies a Congregation and Presence of Bodys, when there is a dissent and absence of Minds? 'Tis the Unity of Minds makes the agreement; and though Company and Universality may seem fine and plausible things to men, yet they cannot be pleasing in the sight of God, if accompanied with Error or Hypocrisie, which are generally the Concomitants of pack'd Agreements: But we know that he is well pleased with our sincerity and good intentions; and will rather Pity than Punish, our unwilling and unfortunate mistakes, in our various and differing methods and instances of Respect unto him. But my design is from the impossibilitie of mens agreement, about the things they contend, from the innocencie of their first Differences, from the folly and vanity of their Contention; all aiming at, and designing the same things, *viz. The Salvation of their owns Souls, and the Glory of God*; to perswade Men to calm, quiet and soften their Minds, and to convince them of the Unreasonableness of their Mutual Severities and Impositions, and to dispose them to Mutual Compliances and Charity: Also I would discountenance, as much as possible, the foolish and vain attempts of those men, who with all the Art and Industry imaginable, do endeavour to make the World all of one mind; and are impatient of any Contradiction and Dissent. 'Tis strange that the Experience of so many Ages should not School them into a better Understanding; let them quote the Age wherein they all agreed: Has there not been Father against Father,

ther, Council against Council, a continuation of Changes and Innovations; And have we not transmitted to us a Black List of Heresies and Schisms, as men call them? And 'tis possible they may quote an Universal Force and Tyranny, but never an Universal Agreement. But why should I go on? These are things past contradiction, &c. And what hopes is there now to make men all of one mind, more than formerly? Have we not their Difficulties, and our own too, to contend with? And to say true, we have nothing handed down certain, and not subject to dispute, but the Good Being we adore, and his only begotten Son, in whom we believe. These things indeed are Universally Credited amongst us, and not disputed by any. But all other things do, and may challenge a Dispute, since they have passed through so many differing Hands, and served so many different Interests and Parties. Indeed some Records I reckon more Authentick than others, I mean those that teach and instruct us in the ways of Peace and Holy-Living; but in general, all lie more or less liable to exception. For they have been managed by men of various and differing Understandings, Passions, Humours, Constitutions and Interests. And have we not the same sort of men? And is not the World governed by the same Methods and Politicks, as formerly? We see every party quote Scripture, and Fathers and Councils one against another. But to what purpose? For none of them at this time of the day, after the Revolution of so many years, are competent or sufficient to decide our Differences: Every Age brings up men of Prudence and Discretion enough to govern themselves; and what the Fathers did, is not to be drawn down for a President for these Times: They lived in Ages wherein their Civil Customs were different from ours; and their Civil Customs may as well be imposed on us, as their Ecclesiastical; their Civil Customs did influence their Ecclesiastical, and so doth ours; and that in-  
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creases the difficulty: Besides, they were but men, and so are we: They were good men indeed, and lived Holy Lives, and were Ornaments to their respective Generations; and as such we ought to respect them. But there is too much reverence paid to Antiquity by some; and they are apt to draw very weak Conclusions; and say, Such a Father said such a thing, *ergo*, 'tis true; and think this way of Arguing is good and Authentick, never considering the Truth and Reasonableness of the the Thing, so much as the Authority of the Man. But further, passing over the Iniquitie of the Times, and the Corruptions which they may have undergone; and supposing them to be all truly transmitted to us, yet they will signify very little at best, since every Disputer and Party is to manage them: They will speak any thing we would have them to speak; and are Weapons in the Hands of every one that pleases to take them: And nothing is more common than to hear all Sides and Parties say, They have Reason, Scriptures, Fathers and Councils on their Side; but this signifies nothing at all, because they must not be Judges in their own Case. Indeed they signify, as to particular men for instruction and direction in Holy Living; and give Excellent Counsel and Advice, and minister to Holiness and Piety, but will decide few of our Controversies, since Parties must manage them. 'Tis certain that Law, Scripture, Argument and Reason, signifies little amongst Disputers; each Party calling that Law, which doth serve their turns; that Scripture, which doth seem to countenance their Opinion; and that Reason and good Argument, which favours and tends to promote their Design; and not what really are so: And this misery will still be continued in the World, as long as we have several Interests to manage; several Parties, and so few (if any) indifferent, and impartial Judges amongst us; and all things will suffer Aggravation or Extension, be great or little, good or bad; according as they

they quadrate with mens Opinions, Prejudices or Interests. But supposing men to be Impartial, Diligent and Honest, yet 'tis impossible they should not differ in their Sentiments, since their Understandings are so various: And some understand more, some less than is meant; some Figuratively, some Litterally, some Relatively, others Collectively, Distributively, Privitively, Positively, Affirmatively, Negatively, and a hundred other ways, to the wearying and wearing out of all the Adverbs: Witness all those numerous and large Comments and Explications on Law and Gospel, both by Antient and Modern Expositors, most differing one from the other, though on the same Texts; according to the Capacities, Differing Acquirements, Educations, Prejudices, or Prior Notions of the Managers, all which add to the Difficulties of mens agreement. Then again, Affection being founded in Likeness; the various Authors find Abettors, according as they find Readers of the same Humour and Constitutions: One loves such a Book, and such a Man; and saith, what he Writes is certainly the Truth and Right; and why? Not that it really is so; but because he writes something suitable to his Genius and Complexion: The Sanguine loves the Chearful and Encouraging; the Melancholy, the most Doleful and Tragical Exposition; and most call that which pleases them the Truth.

But further, Let them tell me what Good they have done, by such their Endeavours of Uniting Men, as they call it? Have they not raised more Devils than they can lay? Has not one Book begot another, and one Dispute another? And so like is Truth to Falshood, and one thing to another, and there be so many Plausibilities and Probabilities, the Wisest and most Confiding Man may be deceived; and so by Consequence this Humour of Disputing, propagated to the end of the World; which instead of Curing and Healing Differences, doth but enlarge the Breaches, and encrease

crease them, by raising mens Passions, and destroying Charity. As to Publick Disputes, 'twas hardly ever known but they that had the most Power, and the largest Interest, always went away with the Victory. And as for Private, I scarce ever knew two Persons engaged in a Dispute, but that both came off worse, though both got the better: The love of Victory on one hand, and shame of being overcome on the other; their Passion and Indiscreet Zeal, their Weakness or Interest, hath made them so obstinate and resolute, and put them on such Shifts and Artifices, that have made them come off worse men, I am sure worse Christians.

Since then it must be allowed me, that 'tis impossible the World should agree, or be all of one mind; and no means found Competent to make them so; to what end then do men Dispute? Do they think to Unite the Poles, or reconcile Contradictions? Indeed their Endeavours may be pitied, because they may mean well; but not at all to be commended. But to speak Truth, they have seen the Impossibility of their Attempt long ago, and therefore laid their Heads together for an Expedient to salve all. Hence came the concern of Infallibility; a Poor Shift indeed, which hath made all things worse than they were before; and has been so often Baffled, and is such a Ridiculous thing, so much against the Experience of all Mankind, that Laughing at it is the best way of Arguing. And to my Apprehension, the more Certain and Infallible Truth, of the *Impossibility of Agreement*, is a much better Expedient to charm the mad World into an agreement, than that of Infallibility. For when after so much Experience, and so many Attempts made, men find the impossibility of Agreement; methinks they should at last agree, that is, they should yield themselves Vanquished; see their Faults and vanity of Contention, be induced to be at Peace one with another; cease their mutual Violence and Severity, and Amicably turn all into mutual Love, Compliance and



Charity And when the Romanists boast of their Agreement and Infallibility, and object it to the Protestants, that they cannot agree; I would have them tell them again, that its impossible to agree, nor is it necessary; and that it is no Crime to disagree in their Sense. Also that their Agreement, however they may boast, is no Agreement; that the Fagots may as well be said to agree, when they are bound up together, or Sheep when drove up together and pounded in their Folds: and that it is rather a Conspiracy, or any thing in the World, more proper than an Agreement.

And let me ask the World the question, Where the Harm would be, if men worship their Maker in their own way; and have various and differing apprehensions of things; it all their respective Opinions and Sentiments be secured from having ill Effects on the Publick, and from disturbing one another? What is that to me, if a man think a Tree to be a Man, or a Man to be a Beast; if a man so mis-thought and apprehended, be secured from being Baited or Worried? We are all to answer to one common Lord and Master; he is to be our Judge, if we have served him not right: Indeed I look on it as my duty to inform my Neighbour, and instruct him, if he be out of the way, if I think my way the better, and more pleasing to my Maker. But then, since I may be mistaken, and out of the way, and he in the right way, my method with him ought to be no other than Reason and Discourse; and that in the most moderate and discreet way I can. For if I should do otherwise, I may bring a greater inconvenience on him, than that I pretend to Regulate.

But again, As to the innocency of Differences; why should any man be esteemed a Criminal, or punished as such, whose Desires and Intentions are to please his Maker as well as mine? We see all Rivers, little and great, at last discharge themselves into the Ocean; and all Divisions and Sects of Christians have the same End and Tendency,

oy, and Terminate in the same Center, viz. in endeavouring to Please, to Glorify and honour their Maker. Why therefore should the distinct Ways and Methods in Spirituals, be more a Reproach than those in Temporals; and men not to be allowed to choose for themselves their Method in obtaining a Mansion in another World, as well as securing a Possession in this. Their own Souls lies at stake, which if they have any apprehensions of, must needs oblige them to be sincere? But this interposing in other mens matters, and being over-officious, I like not; and they that force their own Inventions and Models of Worship on other men, under the specious pretences of Right and Truth, do (I am affraid) force a Trade rather than Truth, which stands in need of no Coercion. And indeed there is such a mysterious Trade driven in the Concerns of Religion, and so much Gain gotten by some particular Methods, that 'tis no wonder men contend so earnestly for them.

And amongst other hinderances of True Holiness, and Christian Affection, and of the Establishment of Truth and Peace amongst us, are the Dignities, Honours and Large Revenues of Spiritual Men: And I beg some Gentlemens Pardon if I think amiss, when I say I believe the Flames of Contention that are afoot, and so much disturb Christendom, would mightily cease and abate, were the Oylie Substance of their Fat Benefices, a little diminished or taken away: And that a great many men would not think it worth their while to contend so about the invisible things of another World, were there not a great deal to be gotten by it in this. But in order to a Conclusion.

We may hope and wish Truth and Peace to flourish in the World, but we never shall see it, as long as Temporals are so mixt with Spirituals: There will never be a prosperous or blessed issue of such an unhallowed and un sanctified mixture. But when there is a divorce put to these, and all power of the Church be devolved on the State; and the

men be chosen in another manner, and their Allowances settled on them *per* the State; and when Learning is better managed and reformed. For the Poet saith but too true,

——— *Whatsoever ill the State invades,  
The Pulpit either forces or persuades;  
Others may bring the Jewel to the Fire,  
But they the Breath, which makes the Flame aspire.*

And that was but an unlucky sort of Comment, which one made of those Words wrote over the Head of our Saviour by *Pilate*, in *Hebrew*, *Greek* and *Latin*, that he should be persecuted most by men skilfull in those Languages: For 'tis the Learned men are the Warriors, and manage all our Contentions; they would in a manner naturally Disband, had they not such Leaders, who have little else to do but to raise unnecessary Quarrels, and set the World together by the Ears. The other three parts of the World have little leisure, and less will and abilities to maintain them; I say when Learning is better managed, and when a perfect and unalterable Toleration of all Perswasions in Religion is established, then the Eternal God will bless the World with Truth and Peace; but 'tis only the last, I mean Toleration, which we at present may expect; and that for the Reasons aforementioned; as also for the unvaluable Benefits hereafter we shall certainly reap thereby. For in particular,

What can more contribute to the Security, Prosperity and Flourishing State of this Unhappy Nation, than by one joint and Universal Act, to Abolish all those Grievances which have so long disturbed our Peace? I mean *Penal Laws* and *Tests*; and at the same time to Settle and Establish a *Great Pacifick Charter*, that Hell it-self, nor all the United Force of Malicious Men shall never be able to disturb. Wherein every one cannot fail to find their Account, except those who are not fit to be quieted or contented, because they will not be satisfied with their proportion of Power, or good Livings, but demand all. But leaving such unreasonable men to be

be managed into Compliance, by that Power, which I hope will do it effectually, I promise my self, that all the rest will not betray so much Weakness, as not to acquiesce in such a Sovereign Expedient, which will certainly redound to the good of the whole. For hereby every one will have his Religion secured to him; by as good a Title as his Land; every one will be secured from the Destructive and Fiery Zeal of his Violent Neighbour. And since *humanum est errare*, and mistakes and errors will be, as long as there be men; yet this Great Charter will protect all from the evil of one anothers mistakes; and will put an end to mens ruining and killing one another for Gods sake; will make the *Lion lie down with the Lamb*, and silence the voice of Complaints in our Streets; will check the Insolence and Ill Nature of Perverse Men, of all sides; and let men Worship their Maker sincerely and truly, and prevent Hypocrisie; will make His Majesty's Government easie, and prevent Factions, Plots and Conspiracies against it; will give him leave to exert His Royal Vertues, and make as considerable a Figure in Christendom as any of His Ancestors; will take away all the pretensions ill men may have from Coercion & Restraint, and leave them inexcusable if Turbulent and Unquiet; so that none dare endeavour to Patronize them, or mitigate their Condign Punishment. Will lay asleep all Fears and Jealousies, and quier the Passions and Animosities of men, or at least make them Impotent and Uncapable of doing Hurt. And in fine, that by its Provisions, and Sanctions, will qualifie things so, that men of all Perswasions shall have an equal Claim and Title to Religion, Property, and their Princes Favour; and that no publick Emoluments; no Office, Interest, Benefit, Favour or Preferment, shall be denied to any man, on the account of his Perswasion; but purely on some Notorious Wicked Incapacity. And further, by its *Pacifick Nature* will gradually effect, that the present odious malignity affixed to the distinguishing Names

Names of Christians, shall be mortified and made innocent; and to go under several different Denominations, shall be no more a Reproach to them, than it is for Citizens to be free of several Companies; or Country-men to be called by the Name of the County they were born in. But in answer to some Objections.

If it be alledged, *That the Papists ought not to have the Benefit of Forgiveness, because of their Wickedness*: To this I answer, that the same Argument holds good against any Side or Party; for they have been all wicked by Turns, when in Power, and have been pretty even one with another; and so, I think have the greatest Reason to agree: Besides, if we stay, and will admit of no Religion to receive an Establishment, till its Professors have cleared themselves of all Real Crimes, or pretended ones; I am afraid we shall have no Religion at all: For all Sides have been really to Blame, and really Criminal, though every Side endeavour to Extenuate their Guilt; but being Parties, must not be Judges in their own Case. Their Censuring their Faults, do's not make them less guilty, though some men think so; and by an odd sort of Inference they reckon to make another man a Criminal, is to make themselves Innocent. And the principal thing urged in their Discourse is, To magnifie others Faults, and lessen their own. And this humour is so Epidemical, I meet it almost every where; And if they can prove, or make out any way, the Persuasion of another to be absurd or odd, they look upon themselves to be very good Christians; never considering how easie a thing it is to make any thing absurd; nor what different ways of Falshood there are; in some of which 'tis ten to one, but they themselves may Tread.

But to come to a more ingenious Confession, and as an Indifferent Person to speak the Truth, and give all Sides their due, I protest I cannot in Conscience vindicate any Parties proceedings. The *Papists* have Faults enough, and the



the World is inquisitive to find out more; not to mention the misrepresentations and foul charges, which is inseparable to disputing Parties: Nor are the *Protestant* Dissenters altogether innocent, but in many things must acknowledge they have sadly miscarried: Especially in those late unhappy troubles, in the Reign of King *Charles*. In *Michaels* is the Church of *England* to be shew'd, who by their Severities, and Pressures of Government, gave but too great provocations to both; and their *Evangel* Driving like *Jehu*, is the principal Cause of most of our Troubles. They were the occasion of the *Scots* Rebelling, Arch-Bishop *Land* imposing the *Common-Prayer* upon them, (contrary to the Constitution of their Nation) and of the *English* former and late Rebellions, by laying such Loads on Dissenters, which they would not help to bear with the least of their Fingers; but most of All, to blame by establishing Iniquity by Law, and after so much mischief done thereby, yet vindicate the same Law still, and by Consequence their Wicked Proceedings. In Calm Fits and Sober Hours, they confess their former ill Treatment by Dissenters has made them over-act themselves of Late. And why will not they allow this to be a good Plea in the Mouths of others, who over-acted themselves too in their late and former Outrages; resenting too deeply and unchristianly their Ill Usage and Oppression? Tyranny and Oppression is the Original and Source of most violent Outrages; and when ever the Bank were pull'd down, the Current runs with the greatest Impetuosity. 'Tis well known, the *Papists* have had but miserable Treatment in *England* ever since the Reformation, but especially since Queen *Mary's* time; and 'tis known as well that Dissenters have had little better. And no Wonder, therefore, that they have plott'd and been Troublesom to them that have kept them under; and the Church of *England* too, when under Watches, by the Dissenters, were Blotters to bring themselves (tho they call'd it the King) in again: Indeed they

they have not had so many Temptations as others; for since the Reformation, they have been mostly Regent, and in the Sunshine: I shall not further object against them, what their Enemies have Objected; but say they begin to show themselves men, and exactly like other men too; they grow angry and discontented; sometimes Threaten, sometimes Flatter, then Reflect, stave Jealousies, and raise Bugbears; and use all the little Shifts and Artifices which their reputed Enemies, in much worse Circumstances, formerly used; and then were objected to them as Crimes. So that in Conclusion, after all the noise and talk of Loyalty and good Principles, by every Party, I find none of them good, but when they are pleaded (which they say the Devil is) and none much worse than another, but when they are provoked.

But here I know, will come in an Objection, And that is That the Papists by their Principles are so far from thinking it a sin to destroy their Innocent Neighbours, (which are Hereticks, as they call them) that they think it matter of Merit and Duty so to do. Here is an Objection with a Witness.

*En dieu j'ay mis mon espoir, et mon salut, et mon salut, et mon salut.*  
 If this could be prov'd, (which I never yet saw) and if they clear not themselves from this, and give the World satisfaction; I am so far from extenuating such a wicked Principle; that I think what Opposition their Adversaries have already, or hereafter may make against them, is all but too little; and I think it my Duty, and ought to be the Duty of every Honest Man, to extirpate such a Race of Men from the face of the Earth; and to respect them as a sort of Wild Beasts, that would Devour and Prey upon Mankind. God forbid I should argue for such a sort of men. What I argue for is only for an Indulgence of thought in things of an Indifferent Nature, and Principles which terminate in Speculation, and produce no Wicked Action. And I here declare again,

again, as at first, That 'tis an unreasonable thing, that any sort of men, under what Denomination soever, should have the benefit of any Government, much less be admitted as a Member, or Administrator in it, unless he do his endeavour to Encourage and Protect it, and give Security for his quiet and Peaceable Living under it.

But then as our Saviour commended the *Unjust Steward*, so I cannot but commend all our Parties, and must needs say *they do wisely in their Generation*, abating their Honesty and Integrity. For to begin with the Church-of-England; Her Sons Act as Prudently as can be imagined; for they have got all into their own Hands, all the Spiritual Preferments in the Nation; if any of them should turn *Papists*, that is madness, for they have got all already; and the *Papists* have nothing to give them: They know, that if either they move to the Right Hand, or the Left, they shall be Lessened, since they are craving needy People on both Sides them: Therefore their interest consists in being obstinate, and standing out against the Kings Demands: They may be made less, but cannot be made greater: Therefore by all means possible they endeavour to keep those under that would come in Snacks with them; also on the score of their Abuse, for they are Conscious of the Injury they have done, and are afraid of Retaliation.

Then as they cannot be blamed to keep their Wealth and Power; so on the other hand, the Endeavours of others must not be blamed in getting what they can: And, who in Conscience or Equity can accuse them, who being Poor, Indigent and ready to be Starved, do endeavour to supply their Wants, and come in Partners with the Possessours? 'Tis natural for every man that has been Oppressed, to rid himself of his Yoke, and endeavour to secure himself for the future; and that man deserves to be hang'd, who standing condemned by an unjust Law, and gets a Reprieve, will not endeavour to get so unjust a Law to be Repealed. But

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then the Injustice of the first, or the irregularity of the Methods of the Last, I cannot consent to commend. And it grieves me to Consider how Religion is made a Stalking Horse; and is taken up for a Pretence and Cloak to cover mens base designs; and indeed as far as ever I could observe, two thirds of that which men call by that venerable Name, is nothing else but a Trick to get Money. And the Holy Scriptures are like Original Deeds, by which any man that has but a little more Wit than Honesty, may lay claim to an Ecclesiastical Possession.

But lest I should be thought to speak irreverently of those Holy Books, I acknowledge, That if a man be sincere and honest, and look for Truth as if he had a mind to find it; and have no other ends in his Search, but to please his Maker and save his Soul; he may easily find enough to make him both happy here and hereafter. But as far as I can see, men seem to understand most of the Scriptures backward. For whereas the Prophet saith, *He hath shewed thee, O man, what the Lord requireth of thee, to do Justice, and love Mercy, and to walk Humbly with thy God.* And the Apostle tells them, *That True Religion before God and the Father, consists in visiting the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction, and to keep themselves unspotted from the World;* also another, *That they should follow Peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:* By their Actions and Living, they seem to understand them clear contrary, as if it had been said thus, *He hath shewed thee, O man, what the Lord requireth of thee, to do Injustice, to love Persecution, and to walk at Enmity and Defiance with thy God.* True Religion before God and the Father is this, *To neglect the Fatherless, and afflict the Widows, and to conform themselves to the Fashions of the World; and follow Contention and Strife with all men, without which no man shall go to Heaven.* Truly mens Actions seems to favour this latter Interpretation, rather than the former.

And

And many other places of Scripture I could quote; which exhort to Love, and Peace, and Mutual Compliances and Condescension, which men either do not, or will not understand; and 'tis a deplorable thing to consider how partial they are in understanding the Scriptures. Some Texts are great Favourites, when they seem to countenance their Interest or Designs; and others that will not vote for them, are cashier'd, and a hundred Objections raised against them. That of *Contend earnestly for the Faith once delivered to the Saints*, I warrant you at this time o'th' day is a precious one; for here peevish Nature is gratified, and here if I have a mind to keep any thing that is dear to me, I have a Cover for my Dish; 'tis but calling my Faction, my Passion, Humour, Prejudice, Interest, &c. by the Venerable Name of True Faith; and then I have a Commission to contend earnestly for it. *Contend earnestly with us for our Livings and Benefits, once delivered us by the Laws*, would not look well; But *Contend Earnestly for the Faith*, that's plausible and goes down glib. I will readily allow the Objection which I see is ready to come upon me, that is, *That men are obliged in Conscience to contend for the Faith, or that which they think to be true*; yet this Contention ought not to proceed further than to Edification; and if any other Methods be used besides calm Reasoning and Argument, that destroy Charity, an Indifference is better than such Contention. And when men exhort their Auditory to Contentions; however innocent their Meaning and Intentions may be, yet their Discretion must be blamed, and they will never be able to clear themselves of Publick Censure, if they do not qualifie their Discourse with all the Limitations and Restrictions imaginable; for men are too apt to contend, without Exhortation.

But to Conclude, *Since in so many Ages, no Humane Art or Industry, nor all the Powers on Earth together, by either force*



Force or Stratagem, neither hitherto have found, nor hereafter can possibly find an Expedient, or make it possible, amidst so many various and all incompetent mediums, That all men should be of one mind, or that they should not Disagree, not be Deceived, or not have Differences and Contentions; I say since these things are impossible to be done ( *Salvâ veritate, and allowing liberty of Judgment* ) The attempt is Vain and Foolish, and not to be prosecuted but by Fools or Mad Men. And since it is so, the next thing which naturally comes under Consideration is, How to make all things as Innocent and Ease, and suitable to Government as possible. All which things His Gracious Majesty having duly Weighed and Considered; out of Great Experience, Deep Wisdom, and Princely Compassion towards his miserable contending Subjects, hath found out and pitched upon the only Expedient in order thereto. I mean a Great Pacifick Charter, which though it cannot subdue mens Ill Nature and Will, yet will put it out of the Power of any one Contending Party to hurt another. 'Tis this Instrument and only this (with Gods blessing) can make our Miserable Contending Nation Happy. And he either do's not truly understand his Interest, or is no True-English-man, who doth not heartily desire it, and by all honest means endeavour to promote it. And I doubt not, mangre all the Opposition of Interested and Unreasonable Men, but that His Majesty will duly Effect it. The Almighty, all Good and Wise God, who put it in his Heart, no doubt but will assist him in it; and if so, Gamaliels advice is pertinent in the Case, To strive against the Almighty will be to no purpole; They but in vain promise themselves success against the King of Heaven and Earth. It seems to be an Honour and a Blessing reserved by Heaven on purpose for Him; and is an Action and Performance truly worthy of so Judicious, so Just, and so Courageous a Prince; and will raise Him a Name, and a Monument, not to be Defaced by the Spight of Time, or Succession of Ages.

F I N I S.